

## *It's time to get radical on the climate crisis*

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### **Body**

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The all-time heat record in Canada was shattered three days in a row by Lytton, a small town in British Columbia. That town is now mostly gone, burned to the ground.

Raging across the province are wildfires so large that they are producing their own lightning. Hundreds of people died in a heat wave where temperatures reached 25°C above average. A drought-induced famine in Madagascar threatens over one million people with starvation. A pipeline spill in the Gulf of Mexico resulted in the literal ocean burning like the Eye of Sauron. In June, ground temperatures in Arctic Siberia topped 48°C, and earlier this year the warming Arctic destabilized the polar vortex and resulted in a Texas deep freeze.

Every morning I wake up and watch the world end.

I'm aware this seems melodramatic. However, it's the cold, hard truth. We use the phrases "climate crisis" and "climate emergency" not because we wish to ignite fear, but because they are accurate.

I was born into a world facing an existential crisis. And yet, I'm one of the lucky ones. My life has been touched by the climate crisis, as all of ours have. But it has not ended because of it, and for that I am more fortunate than many.

I feel the heat and check the air quality each day, planning my life around when the world is most hospitable for my disabled body. For breakfast I consume toast with jam and an endless stream of news about the latest climate disaster. I read the latest press releases, promising action on climate - in 30 years. (Meanwhile, those in charge subsidize fossil fuels, chop down the last old-growth forests in the country and call themselves climate leaders.) I play political whack-a-mole: every time we manage to smack down one short-sighted, environmentally destructive project, two more pop up to take their place.

I am fighting with adults - adults who are supposed to protect me - for the right to not die. I am nineteen and I am so, so tired.

I'm not going to bother re-explaining climate science here, for two main reasons. One, people much smarter than me have already devoted their lives to exactly that. If you are still denying the reality of anthropogenic climate change, my small article won't change your mind. Two, doing so would legitimize the idea that climate science is up for debate. This is an op-ed, but climate science is not my opinion. It is a fact, and thinking otherwise is extremely dangerous.

Being confronted with disaster and then being expected to go to class like nothing's wrong does something to you. When people praise individual action and applaud incremental change nowhere near enough to save us from climate disaster, I feel it in my chest like an ache. We as a society know what must be done to mitigate and adapt to this crisis. The fact that we refuse to do so is a betrayal of the highest order.

## It's time to get radical on the climate crisis

Too often, the steps we must take to curb the climate crisis are dismissed as too radical, too costly, too inconvenient. Compared to what? Is making ecocide an international crime more radical than allowing the ocean to catch fire because it's profitable for Big Oil? Is stopping fossil fuel subsidies more radical than logging 2,000-year-old cedars on Vancouver Island? Is investing in a just transition to a sustainable economy for all workers more radical than bulldozing sacred sites and forcing oil pipelines through Indigenous burial grounds at gunpoint?

If so, then I suppose I am radical - and you should be too.

The word radical is derived from Latin and means "of or pertaining to the root." For change to be radical, it needs to tackle a problem at the root, the very thing causing the crisis. It doesn't matter with how much care you prune its branches - a tree without roots will blow over the second the wind blows. All the tree planting and carbon offsetting in the world won't fix the fact that fossil fuel dependency is rapidly destabilizing the Earth's climate.

World leaders, we are begging you to dig deep and pursue real solutions. Solutions that align with the best available science, hold Big Oil accountable for their deceit and greed, remove systemic inequalities and prioritize Indigenous liberation.

Let's get radical.

Alyssa Scanga, an organizer with Climate Justice Durham and Climate Strike Canada, studies environmental science at Trent University.

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